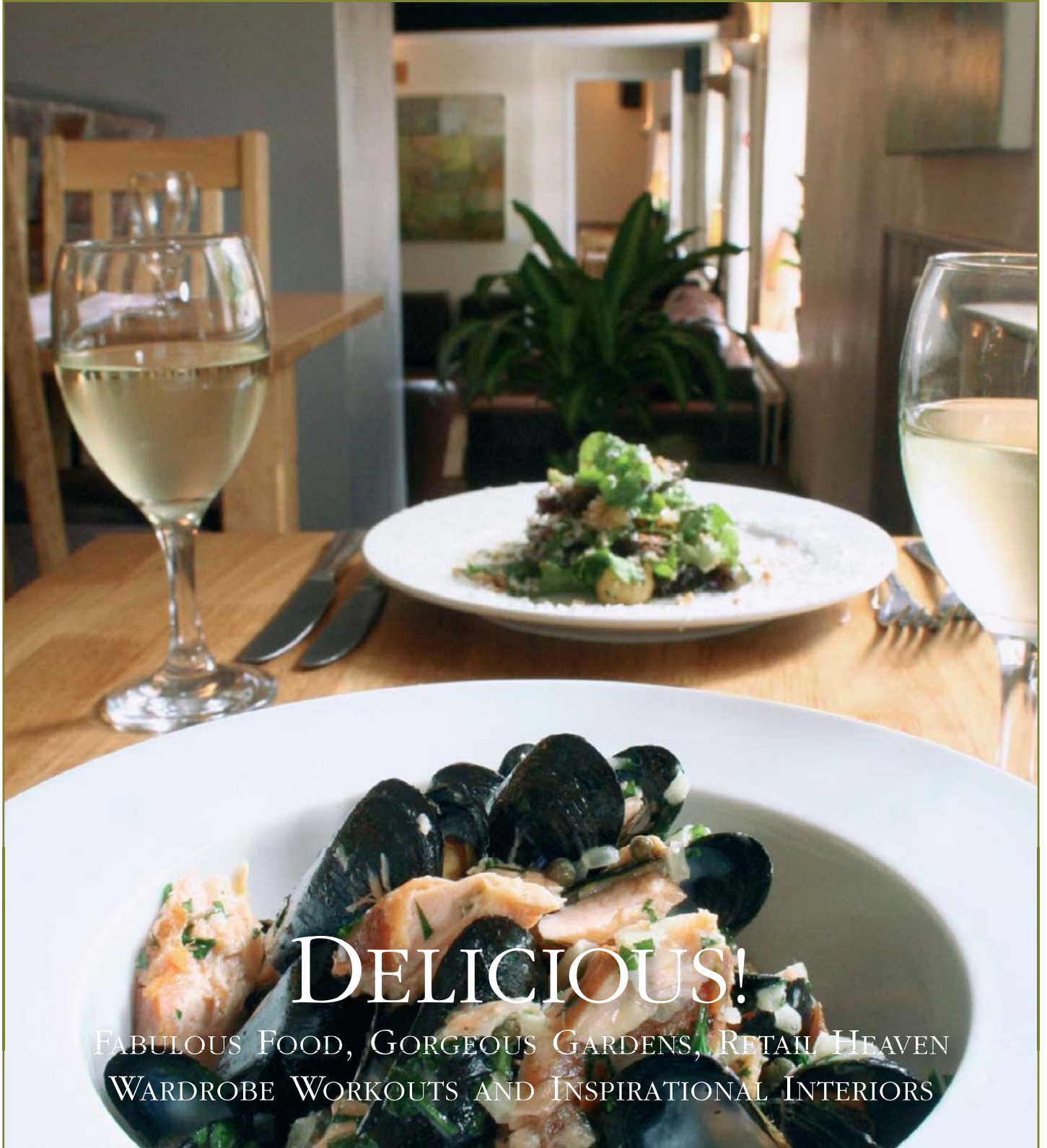


VALLEYS LIFE

AUTUMN 2010 PRICELESS

P R O U D T O B E I N D E P E N D E N T

THE SOUTH WALES VALLEYS' PREMIER LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE



RESTAURANT REVIEWS,
WHAT'S ON, BUSINESS, SHOPPING

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WELCOME

Ah how quickly autumn comes around. Soon the nights will be drawing in and we'll all be thinking of what this season means to us - warmer clothing, getting the garden prepared for the spring, perhaps changing our interior furnishings to richer autumnal colours and getting out that crockpot in readiness for those warming stews and casseroles.

It's often said that we don't truly appreciate what's on our doorstep until we're out of the area for a while. Home is, after all, where the heart is. That's certainly true of the Welsh valleys. With our proud heritage, sense of community, clean air and, of course, our beautiful hills and mountains, there really is something truly unique about this land.

We're hoping to share with you the hidden gems of the valleys over the coming issues. Ones that we know of, have stumbled upon on our travels, or ones that our readers have highlighted for us. If you know of a great little boutique or a fabulous restaurant that you feel ought to be featured, then do please let us know about it so that we can help spread the good word.

There are lots of reasons to get out and explore what's on offer throughout the valleys this autumn, with many of the events having a halloween, fireworks or even a Christmas theme. Yes, it's nearly that time of year again! Best to check out www.visitwales.co.uk or your local authority website to see what events are in your area.

Hope to hear from you soon and enjoy the autumn. I know I will, it's my favourite season of the year.

Jennifer Hobbs-Roberts
Editor
jennifer@valleyslife.co.uk



DERI, NEAR BARGOED

They said don't do it...
so we did it anyway

When we told friends we were going to launch Valleys Life, they told us not to do it. The valleys isn't ready they said. They won't appreciate it. Well, we disagree.

Yes, there are places and attitudes that could be better but the simple truth is, the valleys has great people and a real sense of community. However, we need to start believing. Only then will we become what we can be - one of the great regions of Europe. It's time to stop the hands out attitude and throw our hands in. I hope you enjoy our launch issue.



The following quote from George Eliot inspired this season's cover; *"Delicious autumn! My very soul is wedded to it, and if I were a bird I would fly about the earth seeking the successive autumns."*

Mark Roberts
Creative Director
mark@valleyslife.co.uk



CYMRAEG

Who's using the
Welsh language?



There are many businesses across the Valleys where a Welsh language service is available. To highlight those particular businesses, we're introducing a new feature into the magazine. Where you see the orange Cymraeg symbol, it indicates that a person within the business is happy to speak with you in Welsh.

ADVERTISING

Call 0845 180 1234
to promote yourself

If you want to reach your audience using an approach that's fresh, creative and, most importantly, that gets results then Valleys Life could be for you. Valleys Life is a high quality lifestyle magazine designed to promote the very best the Valleys have to offer. Join us and allow us to spread the word for you.

We're on Facebook



Join us on Facebook for updates, news, opinions, thoughts and ideas.

You can follow us on Facebook by visiting the Valleys Life website and clicking on the Facebook link. We'll be using our Facebook page to keep readers in touch with what's happening in the valleys and beyond.

Follow our blog



The Valleys Life blog is very popular. With updates, vouchers and news.

Visit the Valleys Life website and click on the Blogger logo. If you add yourself to the list, you'll have regular Valleys Life blogs sent to you as they happen - including vouchers, promotions and exclusive competitions.

Sign up for e-news



New for autumn is our V-News - the Valleys Life e-newsletter.

It'll be our way of keeping in touch with readers and subscribers in between magazines. There'll be lots of news and exclusive content so send us your email to subscribe - jennifer@valleyslife.co.uk

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This issue is packed with great features to help you enjoy autumn, one of our favourite seasons.



VALLEYS LIFE IS WRITTEN,
DESIGNED AND PRINTED
IN THE VALLEYS AND
IS PROUD TO BE INDEPENDENT

0845 180 1234

COVER PHOTOGRAPH
MARK ROBERTS

STEAMED CORNISH MUSSELS AT
THE CHARHOUSE, ABERGAVENNY





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WIN!
Sunday lunch for four at
The Ivor Arms. See page 9.

VALLEYS LIFE WOULD LIKE TO THANK EVERYONE WHO HAS SUPPORTED US OVER RECENT MONTHS. OUR CONTRIBUTORS, OUR FAMILIES, OUR FRIENDS (INCLUDING ALL THE NEW ONES WE HAVE MADE) AND OUR ADVERTISERS - WITHOUT THEM VALLEYS LIFE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE. WE HOPE YOU LIKE WHAT WE'VE PRODUCED AND WE'LL TRY TO MAKE EACH ISSUE EVEN BETTER THAN THE LAST AND IF YOU HAVE A STORY YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH.



MUSIC

Brought to you in association with
newsoundwales.com

This issue we asked a few friends across the valleys to tell us which album changed their life and why.

New Sound Wales aims to:

- Keep you up to date with new bands and performers that are emerging from Wales and beyond.
- Recommend new CD's and music downloads.
- Let you know which Welsh gigs are coming up in the months ahead.

If you like acoustic, folk and alternative music, www.newsoundwales.com is the place to bookmark and check on a regular basis.

New Sound Wales are keen to hear what you think about music in Wales, what bands you're listening to and who you would like to see playing in Wales. For more information contact Francis at www.newsoundwales.com

If you'd like to tell us about your favourite album and why, please email us.



Richard Jones
Cwmaman

BEASTIE BOYS

Ill Communication

I was about 19 or 20 when *Ill Communication* came out and just coming out of my heavy metal phase and expanding my musical library to other genres. I was always a fan of rap, but the Beastie Boys mixed metal, funk, soul and pop so well it was instantly infectious.

I had a 1974 VW Beetle 1303 which I tricked up the stereo with six house speakers (which were about the only thing that worked in the car). And I constantly plagued the village with this tape on repeat. The video for *Sabotage* was the best thing on MTV. As a bass player, it was a new challenge to try to play the bass lines, which are always good to learn as much as possible. But the best thing about this album was that it felt like it was *my* album. It was the soundtrack to my step into adulthood. I'd moved into my own flat, bought my own car, and was in the best band in the Valleys!

“The Beastie Boys mixed metal, funk, soul and pop so well it was instantly infectious.”



Rhia Stankovic-Jones
Bridgend

ALANIS MORISSETTE

Jagged Little Pill

I found this album very enlightening as a teenager when you're fighting against the world. I spent many happy times listening to the music stressing about when we would next be going out and what we would wear. We felt we had the world on our shoulders... if we only knew the real worrying would start when we got into the real world!



Sue Stride
Porthcawl

PEARL JAM

Ten

For me it's got to be Pearl Jam's *Ten*. As a child of the Grunge era, these songs echoed throughout my life in the early 90s. An angry soundtrack for my transition into adulthood - festivals, first kisses, long hair and longer summers, rolling waves... ahh those were the days...

THERE'S MORE TO LIFE

At Valleys Life we do more than just publish the South Wales Valleys' premier lifestyle magazine. We also provide many satisfied clients with:

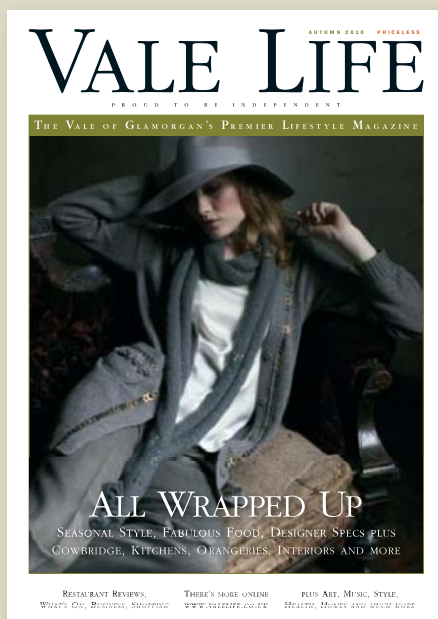
- Graphic Design and Printing
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So, if you'd like your project or publication to have a little bit of Valleys Life magic, get in touch. We'd love the opportunity to work with you.

Contact Jennifer Hobbs-Roberts
07766 106731
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Visit our websites

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www.citylifecardiff.co.uk
www.valleyslife.co.uk



“Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives.”



Spiro Gauci
Cardiff

OASIS

(What's The Story) Morning Glory?

The sort of album you just sit back with your hifi cranked up and appreciate; an album crammed with real, true classic stadium anthems! This album introduced me to a great selection of similarly guitar-driven artists like Radiohead, Stereophonics and Manic Street Preachers... I highly recommend it.



Jenny Rolfe
Llantrisant

SANTANA

Abraxas

If music be the food of love then *Abraxas* is, for me, the wagging finger of Nanny to "eat slowly or you'll get indigestion." But, fools rush in, which I did to this album, had my heart broken and swore never again to be so impetuous. Did it work? Pretty much. Every time I hear it I smile at the warning that sorted the bad boyfriends from the good ones!



Suzanne Jaya
Miskin

FLEETWOOD MAC

Rumours

Christmas 1977. Ritual ripping of the festive gift wrap revealed Mick Fleetwood in tights and pom-poms dangling provocatively. *Rumours* coincided with awkward adolescence during my 'O' level year. Boarding school, boys, assignations on the Malvern Hills, suggestive lyrics, classic tunes, flares and Lindsey Buckingham's gorgeous eyes!

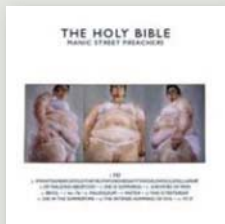


Mark Roberts
Deri

SIOUXSIE AND THE BANSHEES

Join Hands

1979. Already a passing fan of The Banshees, *Join Hands* blew me away. Uncompromising, vicious, beautiful and poetic - its nod to religion, death, the Monarchy and The Great War resonated with my brooding, complicated teenage years. I was hooked and, from my first listen, life would never be the same. I was awake at last.



Matt Powell
Bridgend

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

The Holy Bible

This album made me realise that there was actually an intelligent band in Wales. They say it was Richey Edwards' note before he went missing. It's dark with very deep, intelligent and meaningful lyrics. I listened to the Manic Street Preachers right through my early days as a chef. They kept me going!



David Hieatt
Cardigan Bay

FLEETWOOD MAC

Tusk

This album taught me the importance of taking risks. It would have been very easy for Fleetwood Mac to do another *Rumours*. The same can be said of Radiohead - they could have done another *Bends*, but they never stood still.

SELLING YOUR HOME?

We've all heard the recent disturbing news about the global credit crunch and the effect that this is having on the housing market, but what if you still want to sell your house?

As with anything you're trying to sell, it is important to create the best possible impression to your target audience. So just imagine potential buyers poring over your beautifully presented property in Valleys Life.

Is your property suitable?

First, your property has to be appropriate for Valleys Life. It might have some interesting history, be in a stunning location, or simply be beautifully presented.

After an initial consultation, we would arrange to take photographs and write descriptive text to complement the images. If you're thinking of selling, this is a highly effective way of promoting your home to discerning readers across the South Wales Valleys and is the perfect medium in which to showcase your property.

Prices start from a very reasonable £95 and there a number of packages available for larger properties. Here are a few examples:

Silver

A double-page spread of your home including photography and copywriting

Gold

A four-page feature of your home including photos and descriptive text, and additional web pages.

Platinum

A four-page feature of your home including photos and descriptive text, additional web pages, plus an eight-page brochure containing the feature pages from Valleys Life.

"A feature in Valleys Life is a highly effective way of promoting your home."



Sample double page spread



Valleys Life

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For a free quotation,
please telephone **0845 180 1234**

or email jennifer@valleyslife.co.uk
www.valleyslife.co.uk

ACROSS THE VALLEYS

IF YOU HAVE A STORY WHICH YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE, PLEASE CONTACT VALLEYS LIFE

CAERPHILLY

Caerphilly Castle's past is illuminating

An amazing technicolour journey through centuries of love, hatred, bitter conflict, woeful destruction and ultimate restoration will be played out as *Illuminata 2010* comes to Caerphilly Castle from 26 September until 8 October.



The castle's history will form the centrepiece of this light and sound spectacular, which will coincide with the Ryder Cup 2010. The project is the brainchild of Cadw, the Assembly Government's historic environment service, and world-renowned projection specialist Ross Ashton.

Caerphilly's *Illuminata* story begins in 1268 with the construction of the castle and features Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and Gilbert de Clare as they fight for supremacy and control of the castle with animations projected across the walls of the inner ward.

The final act sees the 4th Marquess of Bute entering the frame. It is 1928 and the Great Depression sees thousands out of work. The Marquess uses this pool of labour to start major restorations of the castle and the animations will show drawings and antiquarian images that trace the story of the castle from ruin to the magnificent restored fortress that we

see today. The final frames celebrate the role that the castle plays in the life of twenty-first-century Caerphilly, as part of events like The Big Cheese and Cauldrons and Furnaces.

Jayne Rowlands, Cadw's Head of Presentation, said, "We are excited to have such an international talent as Ross on board which promises to make *Illuminata* an event to remember and one which will be talked about for years to come."

Ross Ashton added, "Caerphilly Castle is an amazing venue and I feel very privileged to be the first person to be able to project on its walls. They provide a backdrop like no other for this special light and sound show."

More information on the *Illuminata* event can be found at www.cadwevents.co.uk. Tickets are also available to buy from £5 through the Cadw events website, at Caerphilly Castle itself and via Ticketline UK www.ticketlineuk.co.uk.

ABERDARE

0 - 60 years. Park Road Races still accelerating

This year's Aberdare Park Road Races at the end of July were a triumph - if you'll excuse the pun.

The weekend was blessed with good weather and 98 riders and over 7,500 motorcycle fans from all over the UK and beyond descended on the internationally renowned circuit.

Aled Lloyd, spokesman for Aberaman Motorcycle Club, the organisers of the event, said, "This has to be one of the most successful weekends of racing in recent years. The weather gods were kind to us and we attracted some outstanding racers which contributed to an exciting racing programme."

Photography by Simon Charity www.simonracepics.co.uk



Aberdare Park is unique, being the only race circuit in Britain situated less than half a mile from a town centre. This picturesque and quite demanding 0.9 mile circuit winds its way through trees in the local town park and is just 30 miles north west of Cardiff.

The first ever meeting held here was way back on the 30 September 1950, and in the final of the 1988 Welsh Open, ex-World Champion Carl Fogarty smashed the outright lap record in a blistering 42.5 seconds. Derek Smith, Aberaman Motorcycle Club Chairman, commented, "Every year, come rain or shine, a small group of committed, passionate individuals work together to create a superb event. It is testament to their efforts that this event has endured. I am extremely proud of the club, the riders, and of the many thousands of supporters whose dedicated attendance ensures the event continues every year."

If you'd like to know more, please visit www.aberdare-park-road-races.co.uk. If you're interested in sponsoring next year's event, please contact Aled Lloyd on 07870 688835.





COYCHURCH

Relax and unwind at Coed-Y-Mwstwr

You know you are heading somewhere special when you approach the long, tranquil woodland drive that leads to the charming Coed-Y-Mwstwr Hotel, near Bridgend.

The Victorian mansion is nestled in over seventeen acres of woodland on a Welsh hillside and provides a cosy and secluded retreat overlooking the local countryside.

If you are looking for a relaxing short break where you can unwind from the stresses of everyday life, or need a business venue, then you have come to the right place.

Elegant, fine dining awaits in the Eliot Restaurant or take a snack and afternoon tea in the hotel's lounge. For a spot of al fresco dining just step outside to the poolside and catch the early autumn sunshine while taking in the beautiful views and the blaze of seasonal colour of surrounding trees.

Outdoor and sporting enthusiasts may enjoy a round of golf at the nearby golf club and walkers will find much to keep them occupied in the local countryside and hotel grounds - the chef will even pack you a picnic.

Coed-Y-Mwstwr Hotel

Coychurch
Bridgend CF35 6AF
01656 860621

hotel@coed-y-mwstwr.com
www.coed-y-mwstwr.com



CEFN FFOREST

Nathan to box clever in title eliminator

European light-heavyweight champion Nathan Cleverly intends to make a statement against Karo Murat in their WBO eliminator at The LG Arena, Birmingham on 18 September.

The bout is not expected to be for the WBO interim title, as originally billed, but is being described as an official eliminator for champion Juerger Braechmer's crown. Whether or not a world title bout is pending, Cleverly's clash with the equally unbeaten Murat is one that Welsh boxing fans are looking forward to. Murat, who was born in Iraq and spent time in Armenia, has angered Nathan with some of his pre-fight comments and the 23 year old from Cefn Fforest near Blackwood seems more than a little irritated by his opponent. "I'm the total opposite to being a 'gobby' fighter. It's rare that I criticise my opponents," said Cleverly. "I don't claim to be Joe Calzaghe. I'm my own fighter, out to create my own legacy." He added, "Murat is a step up, but I always raise my performance for a step up. I'm going to put on another special performance."

Photo courtesy of V Cleverly (Copyright reserved)



"I'm that fired up I wish I was in the ring fighting right now."

We're big boxing fans here at Valleys Life and wish Nathan and all the fighters a great night's boxing. Tickets are still available as we go to print - it'll certainly be one worth watching.

WIN!

Sunday lunch for four at The Ivor Arms

Who wants to cook Sunday lunch for the family when you can have it cooked for you? And you don't even have to do the washing up!

After recently sampling the culinary delights of The Ivor Arms, I can certainly vouch for the quality and flavour of the food served, the friendliness of the staff and the comfortable surroundings. Don't bother asking the chef for his secret gravy recipe though - we tried and got nowhere! Sunday lunch is for four people for a three course meal up to the value of £100. The winner will be notified and must book in advance. Turn to page 14 for more about The Ivor Arms.

To be in with a chance of winning, just answer the question in the box below and either post your entry to:

The Ivor Arms Competition

Valleys Life, Cardiff House,
Cardiff Road CF63 2AW.

Or email your answer and contact details to jennifer@valleyslife.co.uk Please type **The Ivor Arms** as the email title. Closing date 31/10/10.



Q In which town can you find The Ivor Arms?

Answer

Name

Address

Postcode

Phone

Email

☐ If you do not wish to receive details of special offers from Valleys Life please, tick here.

☐ If you do not wish to receive details of special offers from other companies, please tick here.

Future Homes are a Design Inspiration

The Future Homes project has been officially opened at 'The Works' in Ebbw Vale and Valleys Life caught up with Wendy Darke, the interior designer involved in bringing the zero emission PassivHaus to life.

Wendy, can you tell us a little about the Future Homes project?

We were invited by United Welsh to handle the furnishing of the PassivHaus and, unlike other show home properties we have furnished, this home is not designed to sell houses, but to illustrate how families can live in a sustainable low-emissions home. I wanted to take into consideration not only the environmental issues surrounding the future house, but also that it needed to contain a strong link to its Welsh roots, so I had to think outside of the box.



What did you work on in the house?

We decided which fabrics were to be used for the soft furnishings and had to consider their environmental impact. Obviously, man-made fabrics are gas guzzling and have a negative effect on the environment, and thus I opted for natural, sustainable fabrics, such as linen, wool, silk and even bamboo, which can have the texture of velvet. whilst being sustainable, it even produces more oxygen than trees and can help with the issue of soil erosion. Jab produces a fabric with a 'cradle to cradle' strategy, carbon neutral. This fabric has its own passport, so that when you have finished with it, it can be returned to be recycled! We made some up into a patchwork, which was then quilted by Welsh company 'Time machine Quilting' based in Llandysul.

What was it like to accessorise?

This proved to be the biggest test, but collating the finishing touches was probably the most rewarding. Yet, unlike a normal show home, I had to source Welsh crafts people, all of whom were lovely to deal with and equally excited about the project. I found Jen Jones in Llanybydder, who has a large selection of antique Welsh blankets and quilts, a pair of which were used in the master bedroom for a real splash of Welsh colour and authenticity.

"This home illustrates how families can live in a sustainable low emissions home."



What was the most unusual item for the home?

While researching for Welsh products I came across an article about a couple who were trying to set up production manufacturing Welsh Wool Duvets. The Baavets are a wonderfully entrepreneurial pair - so inspiring and enthusiastic and environmentally friendly! Although I have to say the garden furniture is also quite special - not only handmade from recycled Welsh Oak, but also very quirky. It was touch and go as to whether it would arrive on time though. Sylvantutch, who are based in Corris, needed a large lorry to transport it to us, but the bridge into the village had partially collapsed, thankfully last minute this was resolved and the story telling chair arrived and can now live to tell the tale, in its new Passivhome!

Viewing of the Future Homes project is by appointment only. Please contact Sue John on 01495 357811

Wendy Darke can be contacted at Design Inspiration, 01443 449955 www.designinspirationltd.co.uk



Passionate about the valleys

We are independent. We are not a large publishing group pretending to be home grown. Valleys Life magazine is written, designed and printed in the South Wales valleys. Our income is re-invested in the area.

Our philosophy

We are committed to quality. This quote by William Foster pretty much sums up our thinking. *"Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives."*

Use it or lose it

Business is the very life blood of any community. Without business, villages have no heart, towns have no centre, and cities have no soul. Please support the businesses who advertise in Valleys Life - without them there'd be no Valleys Life magazine.

Small(ish) print

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Green is good

The pulp used in the paper production Valleys Life is printed on is obtained from sustainably managed Scandinavian tree farms and utilises an elementary chlorine-free bleaching process.



Important you read this

We have made every effort to ensure that all information contained in Valleys Life or on www.valleyslife.co.uk is correct and accurate. However, we accept no responsibility for any errors

**Valleys Life magazine.
Committed to quality.**

CARDIFF BAY

Splash out in Mermaid Quay

For the perfect family day out this autumn look no further than Mermaid Quay, the heart of Cardiff's vibrant waterfront. And, with direct train services from Caerphilly and Merthyr Tydfil to Cardiff Queen Street station and a regular rail shuttle service on to Cardiff Bay, it's easy to get to.

Ever popular with children of all ages, Cadwalader's Ice Cream Café sells a delicious range of ice creams from family favourites such as vanilla & strawberry to luxurious apricot & brandy or fruits of the forest. Located on it's own pier, Cadwalader's also serves chilled drinks, smoothies, shakes and light snacks.

With more than 20+ waterfront restaurants, cafés and bars, eating and drinking is very much part of a visit to Mermaid Quay.



Food from Signor Valentino



There are popular brands - including Nando's Chicken restaurant, serving its famous flame-grilled Peri-Peri chicken; Pizza Express for pizza and pasta dishes; and a delicious range of burgers to suit any taste from Gourmet Burger Kitchen - and a host of independent operators offering everything from authentic Asian to classic Italian food. It's said you can eat your way around the world at Mermaid Quay.

For a special family dining treat, why not drop into Eddie's Diner - a picture perfect slice of all-American life from the 1950s. Take your pick from a menu that features hotdogs, traditional milkshakes and an endless variety of hamburgers - all to the sound of old fashioned rock & roll straight from the jukebox!

But there is more than just food on offer at Mermaid Quay. Check out the boutiques and shops - Polka Dot, Zebra 2, Divine, Pethau Bychain, Castle Galleries, Blink and Fabulous Welshcakes offer gifts, accessories & fashion - jewellery & jewellery boxes,

photo frames, mirrors, scarves, handbags, cards, toys, candles & holders, fabulous furnishings and Welsh souvenirs - with many products sourced from local craftspeople. And then there's the Glee Club for laughs, Ken Picton Salon for head-to-toe pampering and much, much more.

For more information visit www.mermaidquay.co.uk



Hair by Ken Picton

or omissions and can offer no compensation should we get it wrong. Please note that the opinions, thoughts, views or ideas expressed in articles contained in Valleys Life are strictly those of the authors.

Caveat emptor

All advertisers have supplied their own copy (and in some cases artwork), and therefore Valleys Life cannot accept any responsibility for disputes between advertisers and their customers. Caveat emptor - let the buyer beware.

Subscriptions

To guarantee your copy of Valleys Life magazine, please send a cheque for £20.00 (four issues) made payable to Valleys Life. Visit www.valleyslife.co.uk for special subscriber discounts and special offers.

Missed the last issue?

We hold a small number of each issue in stock, so if you do need a pristine copy, please telephone us or email jennifer@valleyslife.co.uk. Hopefully we'll have the issue you want (but we cannot guarantee it). Each back issue costs £5 which includes postage and packing.

Yes it's free!

Valleys Life is distributed free through a wide variety of outlets across the South Wales Valleys. Valleys Life is given away free of charge on the understanding that we are happy for it to be lent, passed around, given to friends and generally read until it falls apart. At which point, you can recycle it - and we'd be delighted if you did.

Recycling... because there is no Plan B!

Valleys Life is home grown. It is written, designed and printed in the Valleys.

THE SOUTH WALES VALLEYS
PREMIER LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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The Vale Hospital • Cardiff Bay Clinic • Vale Physiotherapy Clinic



Vale Healthcare

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HEALTH & WELLBEING

Take good care of yourself with Valleys Life's guide to better healthcare.

HENSOL

Cosmetic surgery in the Vale of Glamorgan

The Vale Hospital opened in June 2010, and is located in Hensol (in the Vale of Glamorgan) just 15 minutes from Cardiff city centre. The hospital is an addition to established Vale Healthcare sites in Cardiff Bay and within the Vale Resort.

Leading services include cosmetic surgery and cosmetic treatments, with some of South Wales's best known cosmetic surgeons – Mr Nick Wilson-Jones, Mr Dean Boyce, and Mr Leong Hiew. Consultants run weekly clinics and appointments are usually available within 48 hours.

Exceptional clinical care

The cosmetic surgery team prides itself on exceptional clinical standards and expert nursing care, and is regulated by Health Inspectorate Wales (HIW). The consultant led clinics are supported by experienced and caring nursing staff - providing patients with personalised care from appointment through to recovery.

Idyllic surroundings for recovery

Located within 3.5 acres of rural parkland adjacent to Hensol Lake, there are twenty-five private bedrooms, with all cosmetic procedures performed on-site within one of the two custom-built digital operating theatres which are the most technologically advanced theatres of their kind in Wales.

Cosmetic Surgery services at The Vale Hospital

- Prior to any procedure, patients are seen by a Consultant Cosmetic Surgeon. This is the surgeon that will perform any procedure that takes place
- For most major procedures consultants will see patients twice prior to the procedure (costs included within initial consultation fee)
- All cosmetic surgeons are on the UK specialist register for plastic surgery (which is regulated by the General Medical Council), and are all members of BAAPS / BAPRAS
- A fixed all-inclusive care price for each procedure is provided, which includes everything including all follow-up appointments and after-care.

Cosmetic Surgery procedures at The Vale Hospital

- Breast Enhancement and Augmentation
- Breast Lift
- Breast Reduction
- Face Lift
- Brow Lift
- Rhinoplasty (nose re-shaping)
- Otoplasty (prominent ear correction)
- Blepharoplasty (eye lid surgery)
- Abdominoplasty (tummy tuck)
- Liposuction
- Male cosmetic surgery including pectoral implants/reduction
- Non-surgical facial aesthetics including Botox and fillers
- Non-surgical breast enhancement (Macrolane).



“The cosmetic surgery team prides itself on exceptional clinical standards and expert nursing care.”



The Vale Hospital is open to all, including patients with medical insurance and those who self-pay.

Visit www.vale-hospital.com for details of the next Cosmetic Surgery Open Evening at The Vale Hospital, and to find out more about guide prices and consultation availability.



The Vale Hospital
Hensol Castle Park
Hensol
CF72 8JX

029 2083 6700
enquiries@vale-healthcare.com
www.vale-hospital.com

FOOD & DRINK

EACH ISSUE WE BRING YOU THE BEST FROM ACROSS THE VALLEYS

BRYNSADLER

Sunday lunch is safe in The Ivor Arms

Sunday lunch is always a treat if you choose the right pub (although more and more restaurants are in on the act these days). Having not partaken of the tradition for quite a while, we decided to take the family off to The Ivor Arms in Pontyclun after hearing some good reports on the pub lunch grapevine.

I must confess, the reason we'd stopped doing Sunday Lunch was because it had become all too often, a very hit or miss affair. After several disappointments where poor service and sub-standard food had been the order of the day, I was not expecting great things.

Our first impression of The Ivor, as it's affectionately known locally, was a pleasant one. Tasteful paintwork and signage greet you and the car park was reasonably busy but not overly so (and free of litter – always a good sign). We entered, passing the lounge bar where some locals were enjoying their Sunday pint while reading and chatting, and were shown to our seats and offered some drinks and menus. Looking around, almost two-thirds of the tables were booked and every so often a new party would arrive, giving the place a nice buzz - but without being noisy.

Our order duly arrived and, I have to say, the presentation was excellent – the meals certainly looked good enough to eat. We all tucked in. My lamb was unbelievably tender. Melt in the mouth would describe it perfectly. The vegetables were perfectly cooked and when I say cooked I don't mean *al dente* which is, more often than not, chef speak for undercooked. Beautiful carrots, green beans, peas and cauliflower. No, this was perfect.

Indeed, I was half way through my meal before I realised that I hadn't reached for the condiments – this meal was perfectly seasoned straight out of the kitchen. I particularly liked the potatoes prepared three ways (roast, rosti and boiled) - a pleasant surprise - and, thankfully, whoever had prepared the menu had resisted the urge to describe them as such.

My wife had ordered Leg of Duck, which was so flavoursome. Perfectly crisp skin and beautifully moist meat. Our son was tucking in to the lamb and his cousin was munching his way enthusiastically through a slice of pork – both agreed the food was excellent. We had ordered child portions for them and, although they're both twelve, the portions were more than adequate.

This is probably a good point to mention their wine list. My wife likes a nice sauvignon and there are several on the list along with an intelligent selection of other whites and a good selection of reds. If you're feeling celebratory, there are some sparkling wines and a Pol Roger champagne if you want to push the boat out. To be perfectly honest, at this point I was checking the prices on the blackboard. Usually ingredients of this quality, combined with cooking of this calibre, would carry a much higher price tag.

We finished our mains wondering what the very subtle background heat was in the gravy, but despite several requests to the waitress, chef was not giving up his secret. The gravy really was superb and might have accounted for the reason we didn't have to season our food.

“This is pub food at its very best and I would heartily recommend it.”



We all agreed that, so far, the food had been excellent and decided to see if the desserts were just as good. We needn't have had any doubts. Our son played it safe with some plain vanilla ice cream and his cousin tucked in to a gorgeous sticky toffee pudding – both were devoured leaving no trace.

My wife chose the Pavlova which was, in her own words, “*very naughty*.” I went for the Strawberry Cheesecake with cream, which was really quite delicious. We rounded the meal off with a couple of lattes while the boys quietly honed their Gameboy skills. A very enjoyable lunch all round.

All too often these days, Sunday Lunch just doesn't cut the mustard. Conveyor belt, ping cuisine seems to be the norm but, thankfully, at The Ivor Arms this certainly isn't the case. The food is, quite honestly, superb and just one mouthful tells you corners aren't being cut. This is pub food at its very best and I would heartily recommend it without hesitation.



The Ivor Arms Inn
Cowbridge Road
Brynsadler CF72 9BT

01443 222287
www.theivorarmsinn.com
Sunday lunch served midday to 3pm

Contemporary cuisine at The Charthouse

Every once in a while, if you're lucky, you'll stumble upon a truly exceptional dining experience. For us, The Charthouse in Llanvihangel Gobion near Abergavenny is just one example of those little strokes of luck. My wife and I had spent the morning around Monmouth and Raglan and were on our way to Abergavenny for lunch when we happened upon The Charthouse.



The Charthouse looks like your typical village pub from the outside but step inside and that's where the similarity ends. The stylish, tastefully designed and contemporary interior is very welcoming. Excellent artworks from a local artist adorn the walls and the enthusiasm for 'local' was a clue to what we could expect from the kitchen. We were offered some drinks and seated in some comfy brown leather sofas while we made our choices. There appear to be two distinct dining areas, one each side of the bar/reception area.

I feel it's important to mention here that in similar establishments the service delivery can be quite stuffy and standoffish. Not so here. Down to earth and friendly with not a hint of pretentiousness. What you see is what you get and it's so refreshing.

We were shown to our seats in what I'd call the upper level and were offered warm, just-baked bread. Our starters duly arrived. I chose the *Roast wood pigeon, potato gnocchi and caramelised almond salad* which was absolutely superb – the wood pigeon was beautifully cooked and just how I like it. However the revelation was my wife's *Steamed Cornish mussels, kiln roast smoked salmon, capers, parsley and cream*. This was sensational (we always try each other's food). The full flavour of the salmon mixed with the cooking juices from the mussels and capers had us greedily mopping up the liquor until none was left.



On to our mains. I chose *Madgett's Farm chicken, crisp truffle polenta, and Scottish girolles with braised baby gem lettuce*, which was thoroughly enjoyable and reinforced my opinion that roast chicken is one of the best meals you can have and, even better, it was sourced locally – Madgett's Farm is near Chepstow. The combination of the supporting cast of polenta, girolles and baby gems was scrumptious. My wife, surprisingly, ordered *Brecon venison Wellington, dauphinoise potato, braised carrots and buttered spinach*. Surprising because I've never seen her eat venison before and she doesn't generally like pastry. The venison was unbelievably good – when I say melt in the mouth, it would be the understatement of the year. I can honestly say I've never tasted better, and, what's more, it looked fantastic with the braised and glazed carrots setting the whole dish off.



We weren't going to order sweets at the outset but, after such an excellent experience, couldn't resist – for me *Baileys tiramisu*; my wife chose *Hot chocolate fondant and ginger ice cream*. Needless to say both were stunning and the cheeky twist of adding Baileys to one of my favourite Italian desserts was genius, with a result of it being consumed with enthusiasm – completely indulgent and delicious!

Would I recommend The Charthouse? Absolutely. Head Chef/Owner Wesley and The Charthouse's talented team will soon be very popular on a good many BlackBerrys and iPhones. It's certainly become one of the best reasons for us to revisit the area, but do book first. In the near future I suspect its reputation will mean that simply dropping by won't guarantee a table.



The Charthouse
Llanvihangel Gobion
Abergavenny NP7 9AY

01873 840414
www.thecharthouse-abergavenny.co.uk

The National Gardens Scheme was founded in 1927 to raise money for the nurses of the Queen's Nursing Institute (QNI) by opening gardens of quality and interest to the public. This simple but radical idea was to ask individuals to open up their own private gardens for 'a shilling a head'. Valleys Life digs a little deeper.



BLOOMING LOVELY!

At that time, visiting gardens was already a well established pastime, and it's still enjoyed today. One such couple who have opened their garden to the public is Mike O'Leary and Bev Price of Blackwood.

How long have you lived at Hillcrest?

We moved here in 1986. At that time only the back garden was ours, consisting of a lawn, a willow tree which is still here, and a goat willow which fell over in 2008 and was cut up for edging material. Apart from that, only a few cherry trees and some conifers were here and the cherry trees died suddenly and were removed.

The garden appeared large enough for us at that time and we began work immediately planting trees and shrubs, including the tulip tree, which today stands at over 10m. In 1992 we designed and constructed our cedar gazebo next to the tulip tree. The tulip tree produces an abundance of unusual flowers most years.



How has the garden developed over the years?

In 1990 our neighbour made available a long narrow strip of scrubland immediately next to our original back garden and we bought it. We planted a hedge to provide protection from wind and after a few years spent removing scrub, improving the soil and building walls, we began planting small trees and perennial plants.

In 1997, we bought a further one acre plot of land from our neighbour and began, once more, the laborious process of conversion from scrubland to a garden environment. Our second tulip tree was planted in what is now the vegetable garden and the development of the garden started in earnest.

For the garden to reach its present stage of development has taken longer than other similar projects because everything planned, constructed and planted in our garden has been the result of our own personal efforts - apart from the help given by our neighbour, who was a retired stone-mason and very kindly volunteered to help with the construction of the walls.

We feel that because the garden was not designed and constructed piecemeal, we have had the advantage of having more time to consider our designs and to ensure the interlocking garden areas flow into each other as we envisaged. With the help of a range of garden machinery we are just about able to maintain the grassed areas, the hedges and the trees.

What have been your roles in the garden's development?

As the garden creators, we have uncannily complementary garden interests and roles, although we share the same ultimate vision of a peaceful and natural, unpretentious and welcoming garden. Very little design has been placed on paper as we have always been able to form our ideas together and use simple methods to mark these ideas out in the bare earth. There have been mistakes, of course, but overall we feel very happy about the ambience the garden creates and get so much pleasure sharing our garden with our friends and visitors.

When and why did you join the National Gardens Scheme?

We joined the National Gardens Scheme five years ago but for the first year opening was by appointment only. This meant, in reality, that friends were 'roped-in' to support us and give us confidence to open to the public the following year. We had been keen visitors to NGS Open Gardens for many years prior to applying to join the scheme ourselves. NGS gave us ideas and set us a standard to try to attain.

We decided to apply so that we could share the fruits of our garden labours with as many people as possible and, in the process, raise money for charity. The 'vetting' process is not the frightening experience shown on TV! You simply telephone the NGS Area Organiser for an initial chat about the garden and the visit is very friendly and constructive. You certainly do not need to have the perfect garden as they will provide the advice you need to gain entry to the scheme.

How many visitors do you get?

Our Spring Bank Holiday opening this year resulted in 264 visitors, a record for us on one weekend opening.

"Mike has great patience in selecting and cultivating the many plants required to stock the garden, whilst Bev is responsible for the never-ending grass cutting, hedge trimming and tree lopping."



How much have you raised for charity at Hillcrest?

In 2009 we raised over £4,000 for NGS charities with almost 800 visitors for the season. We are told by the NGS Chairman that this amount is the highest ever raised by a single NGS garden. Not bad for a bungalow in Cefn Fforest! Since we opened in 2004 with the generosity of our supporters we have raised over £17,000.

Have you won any awards?

These are a little thin on the ground! However, we were honoured to receive a Caerphilly CBC special award for horticultural excellence as well as a Mayor's Civic Award in 2007.



What are your favourites plants?

My favourite is the Chilean Firebush, which truly lives up to its name during May, while Bev's is Cornus Kousa 'China Girl' which is a small tree producing myriads of beautiful pale yellow bracts in Spring.

What are your future plans?

Most of the larger trees have been established within the overall layout for some time now, so re-designing and replanting is only necessary when trees have been damaged, as was the case last winter. However, we have ideas which will further enhance the enjoyment the garden gives to our visitors and of course to ourselves.

We plan to 'tweak' the details of the garden design now that the major work has been done and a little more time is available. We aim to look at how we can move closer to achieving our vision of a simple and tranquil garden which provides subtle interest and inspiration.



Mike O'Leary and Bev Price
Hillcrest Garden, Waunborfa Road
Cefn Fforest, Blackwood NP12 3LB

01443 837029
enquiries@hillcrestgarden.co.uk
www.hillcrestgarden.co.uk

The National Garden Scheme has over 3,700 lovely gardens open for charity. For more information please visit www.ngs.org.uk

V-STYLE

VALLEYSWIDE

Suzanne Jaya Style and substance

How confident do you feel in your clothes and do you really know what suits you? If you're not sure then it's time to review and revamp your wardrobe and give it a good old workout.

Autumn/winter is the biggest fashion season of the year, so we caught up with Suzanne Jaya, Personal Stylist and Image Coach, to get some advice on what to do this season.

What's your take on this season's trends?

To be honest, most trends are revisited each year and tweaked slightly. Different words are used to describe them, but basically they are the same. Generally it's the little details such as fabric, fit and embellishments that give clues about how up to date the look is. Trends will always come and go, so really it's about how someone interprets the look that is important.

How does someone get it right?

Assess whether last winter's clothes tick this season's boxes. It goes without saying that you might have an eye on a new pair of boots, the latest aviator-style jacket or something terribly unsuitable. The key thing is to get the foundations right, because if you miss the opportunity to buy the seasonal basics by mid-October then you'll be into the party season.

If last year's clothes have gone unworn, ask yourself why. Maybe you felt uncomfortable, older or the colour drained you. Maybe the money wasted would have been better spent on a style professional?

Do clients find it easy to part with unsuitable clothes?

Yes - usually they can't wait as they have made a conscious decision to see me and they are prepared to make changes to get the results they want.

"These days there is so much choice... the key thing is to get the foundations right."



Photo courtesy of Ted Baker www.tedbaker.com

How do they benefit from your Wardrobe Workouts?

I give them permission to do what they've wanted to do for ages. They get advice on how to dress for their shape and learn which colours and styles suit them best. Most women dabble in lots of bits and pieces, buying clothes randomly and in a hurry. It's no wonder that they're confused and need help.

These days there is so much choice that I am able to take a bird's eye view of what's out there and choose pieces for them that make them look and feel great. That really counts for a lot.

How else do you help?

In so many ways on a one-to-one basis, but also in my group workshops - the details of which are on my website.

For a chance to win a fabulous Wardrobe Workout with Suzanne Jaya enter the competition opposite.

Suzanne Jaya
Personal Stylist
& Image Coach

01443 229296
07833 780006
suzanne@suzannejaya.com
www.suzannejaya.com



Photo courtesy of Nougat www.nougatlondon.co.uk



Photo courtesy of Ted Baker www.tedbaker.com



WIN!

A Wardrobe Workout worth £125

How confident do you feel in your clothes and do you really know what suits you?

If you're not sure then it's time to review and revamp your wardrobe and give it a good old workout. All this can be made possible by entering this competition and, if you win, you could benefit from a wardrobe workout with Suzanne Jaya, Personal Stylist and Image Consultant, which could change your life.

To be in with a chance of winning, just answer the question in the box below and either post your entry to:

Wardrobe Workout Competition

Valleys Life, Cardiff House,
Cardiff Road CF63 2AW.

Or email your answer and contact details to jennifer@valleyslife.co.uk

Please type **Wardrobe Workout** as the email title. Closing date 31/10/10.



Q

I need a Wardrobe Workout because...

Answer

Name

Address

Postcode

Phone

Email

☐ If you do not wish to receive details of special offers from Valleys Life please, tick here.

☐ If you do not wish to receive details of special offers from other companies, please tick here.

When Peter and Mary Murray were planning their extension, they sought the design and build expertise of Cowbridge based kitchen and interiors company Room For Living to create their dream kitchen.

DESIGNED FOR LIFE

We asked Mary what led her to choose Room for Living

I had visited one other kitchen company in Cardiff (who didn't even get back to me) and it was while visiting Cowbridge one day that I popped into the Room for Living showroom where I was introduced to Jo Buckerfield, one of the company's designers. I was very impressed and so, the next day, I took my husband Pete along to meet them.

What was it about Jo that you liked?

Her manner and customer approach was outstanding and she seemed genuinely enthusiastic about the project.

Did you have an idea of how you wanted your kitchen to look?

After much thought, Pete and I decided on a modern kitchen rather than a traditional country kitchen, as we both wanted a very clean look with ultra-modern appliances. We had a rough idea as to the look and layout we wanted and together came up with a basic brief and then left it all to Jo. She came up with a couple of plans and we chose the one we liked. There was no fuss and Jo helped us to choose the worktop and floor tiles.

Are you pleased with the end result?

Our kitchen looks even better than the computer images Jo produced and the whole family is delighted with the outcome.

"We now spend the whole time in the kitchen and the cinema room which leads directly off from it."

How does the new kitchen fit into the extension?

We have had a courtyard amalgamated into the house. Using this and our old kitchen area gives us a whole new space. The architect was Sion Williams from Kotzmuth and Williams. We wanted the kitchen to be the hub of the household and for our other rooms to flow from there.

How do you use your new kitchen?

We now spend the whole time there and in the cinema room which leads directly off from it. The kitchen is great to cook in as it flows so well. Room for Living recommended Miele appliances and even offered us the chance to attend a course to learn how to use the oven and steam oven to their full capabilities, which was really useful!

How long did the extension process take?

The builders were on site for nine months and they have been incredible. We used Michael Coxe from Northrise and would thoroughly recommend him.

You seem to be lucky with your choice of companies working on the project?

Yes, we have been lucky, especially when you hear nightmare stories of projects taking much longer than they should and things going wrong. The whole job has gone smoothly and the team from Room for Living have been superb. Their customer care has been truly outstanding.



Room For Living
Willow Walk
Cowbridge CF71 7EE

01446 771234
info@rflkitchens.com
www.roomforlivingcowbridge.com



“We wanted the kitchen to be the hub of the household and for our other rooms to flow from there.”



It must be a daunting prospect taking over the family business when your mother and father are Leah and Colin Rosenberg and the business is Miskin Manor. Not so, say Amanda and Ben, who have now taken over the helm. Valleys Life talks to this dynamic duo about the exciting new chapter in their lives.

When did you take over from your parents in the running of the hotel?

AMANDA We started taking over the reins about eighteen months ago, but were officially made partners in April 2010. Since then we've invested much time evaluating what is needed for the business to develop and grow. We're now implementing our ideas and, with the support of our excellent team, are already seeing the benefits.

How do your mum and dad feel about the changes you are making?

BEN Actually, they've been really supportive and enthusiastic about the whole process. I suppose it was inevitable that we would end up at the helm but they have been exceptionally patient and have always allowed us to go off and do our own thing.

AMANDA I suppose they understood that it would only happen if and when we were ready. The transition has been very smooth and we're both extremely excited about developing the business, but we're completely conscious of what Miskin Manor stands for, so it can only get better.

What are your roles here?

BEN Over the last fourteen years we have both been involved in the business at different stages and have worked in different areas within the hotel and health club to gain experience enabling us to understand the business inside and out. There is a difference in our ages which has meant we have enjoyed varied life experiences but that contributes positively to our input into the business. These contrasting perspectives, we believe, make us a good team, enabling us to work together and understand each other's areas, with myself concentrating on the front-of-house operations and Amanda managing all aspects behind the scenes. Both roles are vital to the efficient running of Miskin Manor.

"Miskin Manor has a reputation as one of the premier wedding venues in South Wales."

TO THE MANOR BORN

What was it like growing up with your mum and dad at the helm?

AMANDA They are true entrepreneurs and growing up in that environment has obviously had an impact on Ben and I. It has always been a family goal for us to work together as a team. Both of us have different qualities that suit different situations and it is understanding and accepting this, as our parents had to when they were building the business, which is important to appreciate if we are to work together as a team.

What do you think is special about Miskin Manor?

BEN The business is wonderful – what is there not to like about it? The grounds are superb, the location is ideal and the ambience is completely relaxing. Not a day goes by without a nod to how lucky we are. Miskin Manor is special to us and we want every visitor to have the same feeling about it as we do and to feel just as special. If we achieve that, then we have done our jobs well.

What qualities do you think you bring to the table?

AMANDA Valuing each other and our parents and listening to all opinions with consideration and respect. We've both gained experiences outside the business which have allowed us to develop as individuals. We have regular board meetings, so there is quite an open forum for discussions and plans, development and direction. We always assume there's more to learn.

BEN Miskin Manor has a reputation as one of the premier wedding venues in South Wales and we both believe that this is something we can develop further. We have exciting ideas that will be developed over the next two years which will make the experience even more special.



AMANDA It's about not resting on our laurels. We've developed and refurbished the health club over the last eighteen months with a significant investment in the building and equipment and this has resulted in a remarkable increase in our membership, which we're really proud of.

Being around Miskin Manor for so many years, are you still excited about the business?

BEN Absolutely. With a solid background in running a hotel passed down from our parents and our own creativity and ideas, we're both very excited about the future and continuing to build the good name that the hotel has earned over the years.

What's next for Miskin Manor?

AMANDA Our aim and goal is to continuously improve the quality and service that we deliver to our customers and to ensure that Miskin Manor Hotel and Health Club is one of the best four star country house hotels in Wales.



Miskin Manor
Country Hotel and Health Club
Miskin, Rhondda Cynon Taff
CF72 8ND
01443 224204
www.miskin-manor.co.uk



V-BIZ!

The best of Valleys business and enterprise

GLANBAIDEN

Life turning point crafts new career

After completing over twenty-two years in the Army serving with the 1st Battalion The Royal Welch Fusiliers, David Martin was medically discharged after suffering a serious head injury while on duty. This left him with many disabilities. You could say that this was the turning point in David's life.

Using new skills he was taught at the military rehabilitation centre, he bought himself a woodturning lathe. Working in his garage David started to turn wood, making small decorative yet functional pieces.

His woodturning talents were soon recognised and it wasn't long before he was receiving orders. It was at this point that David realised that there were no tool shops locally that sold quality woodturning or woodworking tools. He had to travel several hundred miles to find quality tools and accessories including specialist timbers to keep his new found business creative Welsh Woodturning operating.

This is where Creative Welsh Woodturning grew into TurnersToolBox.com, a new online shop for woodturning and woodworking tools catering to the needs of the amateur and professional craftsman. Sitting in the comfort of your own home or in your workshop office, with the click of a mouse you



can browse the online tool shop. Whether you are just starting out in the craft of woodturning, woodcarving and woodworking or if you are a more established and experienced woodturner or craftsman, David is confident that there is something on his site for you.

With orders running into the thousands from the UK, Europe and the rest of the world, David's business has grown year on year and, despite the recession, is going against the grain and looks set to increase again this year with the addition of a new printed and digital catalogue about to be published.

www.turnerstoolbox.com
01873 831589

Member of The Guild Of Master Craftsmen

BLACKWOOD

Jones hands over the baton at Pensord

This is the dawn of a new era at award-winning sheet-fed magazine printer Pensord. A new team of familiar faces takes the helm of the company following a management buyout by two of the senior directors, members of outgoing Chief Executive Tony Jones and Finance Director Graham Lambert's team - a team that has built the company into one of the strongest and best known in the industry.

Leading the company into its 42nd year are new Managing Director Darren Coxon with fellow Director Karl Gater as Operations Director as they look to sustain and build on the £12m turnover business that has just recorded its best ever first half-yearly performance in both sales and profits.

“Pensord has won the Printer of the Year Award and Investors in People status.”



From left Tony Jones, Graham Lambert, Karl Gater, Darren Coxon

Tony Jones said, “When I led my own management buyout in 2003 I felt it was the best route to turning an under-performing company around, and I now feel as a team we’ve achieved that objective, that the job is done. It’s time for Graham and me to look for new challenges, secure in the knowledge that an MBO is again the best way to continue the legacy at Pensord. When we recruited both Darren and Karl, I was looking for people with the expertise in their fields who shared our ideology in creating a unique culture at Pensord. I am delighted that they will now succeed us to continue that culture into the future.

This is a special company with special people working in it, and I have every faith that Darren and Karl will sustain and build on the success we’ve enjoyed as they take the company forward.”

Darren and Karl will inherit a company that has become a force in magazine printing, with a team of 143, and over 380 magazine titles in its care, along with an enviable reputation in the industry. Pensord has won the Printer of the Year Award and recognition for employee development, evidenced by its Investors in People status.

www.pensord.co.uk

SOUTH WALES

Relax, it's organic and made in Wales

South Wales organic candle maker Gauci has launched its new range of organic aromatherapy candles which are available from www.gaucicandles.co.uk

There are four in the range so far:

■ Sleep, sleep, snore

An exotic 100% blend which combines the relaxing, calming and soothing properties of Lavandin, Valerian Root and Chamomile Roman

■ Sensual

A combination of Sweet Orange, Ylang Ylang and Patchouli, and Petitgrain and Sweet Almond

■ Detox power blend

A 100% blend of Clove Leaf, Lemon, Pine and Neroli Light

■ Energy - wake up call

Combines the uplifting properties of orange and lemon oils, the comforting properties of mandarin, the stimulating properties of pine and reviving properties of spearmint.

Spiro Gauci, owner and master candle maker said, "We've had some wonderful feedback from customers - they really do like the new product range."



Gauci have also created a new range of their soya-based organic candles, imaginatively entitled The Cardiff Range, which has been inspired by much-loved places in and around the city.

Gauci's holistic approach to candle-making seems to be striking a chord with fans waxing lyrical about the products. Local resident Kay Harding says, "I bought a Gauci candle from a Cardiff Bay stall; I feel these candles burn a lot longer and the scent is out of this world. My favourites are Espresso, Strawberry, Lemon Grass and Sage. Worth every penny!"

Spiro says, "At Gauci, we don't want to be the biggest candle business in the world, just the best. And, if we spread a little love and light along the way, that would be nice too."

For more information visit www.gaucicandles.co.uk
Trade enquiries welcome

V-BITES

Valleys bitesize news



Matt Powell's tempting bitter chocolate mousse with wild cherry and sugared hawthorn flowers

NANTYMOEL

What's cooking?

Fans of chef Matt Powell (La Plie) will be pleased to know that he's busy writing a book which will be published next year and he may pop up in a restaurant near you in the not-too-distant future.

VALLEYSWIDE

Win a logo and website

Valleys Life is offering businesses across the South Wales valleys the opportunity to win a new logo and website from a professional design consultancy. Just send your business card and why you think you deserve to win in under thirty words to mark@valleyslife.co.uk. Terms apply.

CARDIFF BAY

The Ski Lodge move to stunning retail space

The Ski Lodge are now located right in the heart of the action in Cardiff Bay. It's The Ski Lodge you know and love, but in a stunning new location!

skilodge.co.uk

4 Dunleavy Drive, Cardiff Bay CF11 0SR
0800 0186754



COWBRIDGE

Three reasons to visit Room For Living

A little bird has told us that Room For Living have three beautiful show kitchens that are going on sale to make way for a new range.

These are high quality kitchens at prices never to be repeated so, do yourself a favour and take a look. Cowbridge is a great day out any day of the week with plenty of good boutiques and restaurants so there's lots of reasons to make a day of it.



For more information, visit www.roomforlivingcowbridge.com
or telephone 01446 771234



we've moved.

QUIET CONFIDENCE

The benefits of Toyota's Hybrid Synergy Drive go far beyond exceptional fuel economy and low CO₂ emissions. Toyota say it is user-friendly and delivers a quiet, comfortable and stress-free drive so the question has to be asked... how good and how green is the Auris?



The launch of Toyota's Auris hybrid in July marked the introduction of Toyota's Hybrid Synergy Drive (THSD) technology to one of its mainstream models for the first time. Auris hybrid has been designed specifically for the European market and is built exclusively in the UK. The 1.8-litre VVT-i petrol engine that forms part of the powertrain is sourced from our friends in the north at their plant at Deeside in North Wales.

Unlike rival, mild hybrid vehicles, Auris hybrid is a full hybrid that can run in petrol and electric modes alone, as well as a combination of both. Hybrid Synergy Drive® thus delivers the energy-saving benefits of a series hybrid, and the high performance benefits of a parallel system.



HOW IT WORKS

The electric motor is powered by the hybrid battery and works in tandem with the petrol engine to boost acceleration during normal driving, but in EV mode it alone powers the driven wheels – a unique feature of Toyota's full hybrid system. During deceleration and under braking, the electric motor works as a high-output generator to effect regenerative braking. This recovers kinetic energy, that would usually be lost as heat, as electrical energy for storage in the high-performance battery.

HYBRID SYNERGY DRIVE

Over the course of any journey, the drive operates in different modes to maximise overall vehicle efficiency. When the car comes to rest, the engine stops automatically to conserve fuel. In low-efficiency conditions, such as at start-up and low to mid-range engine speeds, the vehicle automatically runs in EV mode, using just its electric motor and this eliminating CO₂ and NO_x exhaust emissions. Under normal driving conditions, the source and allocation of power is constantly adjusted between the engine and electric motor to achieve the best performance with maximum fuel efficiency.

"Toyota's Auris hybrid... low maintenance and durability..."

By means of Auris hybrid's Electronically Controlled Braking System, the electric motor acts as a high-output generator during deceleration and under braking. The level is constantly managed via an engine-driven generator, which means there is no need for the battery to be recharged from an external source.

PERFORMANCE AND ECONOMY

THSD provides instant power, strong and seamless acceleration and remarkably quiet operation, while at the same time returning class-leading fuel efficiency and emissions and, in combination, the 1.8 litre VVT-i petrol engine and the electric motor produce a maximum 134bhp, enabling 0 to 62mph acceleration in 11.4 seconds and a 112mph top speed. Moreover, when the driver switches to EV (Electric Vehicle) mode, the car can run emissions-free on its electric power alone for up to 1.2 miles at speeds up to 30mph, according to the level of battery charge and the driving conditions.



Auris hybrid returns a class-leading fuel consumption figure of 74.3mpg (giving a possible range of up to 735 miles on a single tank of fuel) and tax-efficient CO₂ emissions from just 89g/km, a level unmatched by any other car in its segment. In addition, NO_x emissions are significantly lower than those of diesel cars of comparable performance.

MAINTENANCE AND DURABILITY

Auris is designed for low maintenance and durability and costs over 60,000 miles are kept down thanks to low parts pricing and short service times, which mean reduced labour costs. The outstanding reliability of Hybrid Synergy Drive® has been proven by its successful installation in Prius, which has achieved the lowest warranty cost per unit of any Toyota model and both reassuringly and confidently, the new Auris hybrid is sold with Toyota's pan-European five year 100,000-mile warranty, extended to eight years and 100,000 miles for the hybrid battery. Toyota clearly believe in their product.



Toyota's commitment to longer lasting components and lower servicing costs is demonstrated in the 1.8 litre VVT-i petrol version which has a maintenance-free timing chain, an element-type oil filter, miniaturised spark plugs and no drive belts; all features which deliver worthwhile cost savings.

And, thanks to the efficiency of the electronic braking system, the front and rear brake pads should last a little longer. Even the exhaust is expected to last more than five years.

INSURANCE & RESIDUAL VALUE

With its UK insurance rating at a highly competitive 13E and anticipated high residual values you're likely to have a little more green in your pocket too which is always welcome.

DESIGN

The Hybrid-specific exterior has been designed for improved aerodynamics and a smooth, quiet and comfortable driving experience that also delivers better fuel efficiency.

Improved interior quality and ergonomics incorporating hybrid-specific finishes, instrumentation, switchgear and upholstery are also present.

The Auris hybrid is offered in two equipment grades, T4 and T Spirit but even the standard T4 comes with an impressive list of features as standard - to be fair, would you expect anything less from Toyota these days?

COST OF OWNERSHIP

In cost of ownership terms, Auris hybrid's total economy is underpinned by its best-in-class CO₂ emissions and outstanding fuel economy delivering tax breaks, low running costs and congestion charge exemption - which may not be here in South Wales yet but the writing is on the wall.



To test drive an Auris contact:

Toyota World Cardiff
Hadfield Road, Cardiff, CF11 8AQ
02921 157823
www.toyotaworldcardiff.toyota.co.uk

Social Life covers launches, parties, functions, exhibitions, charity events, fashion shows, engagements and weddings.

VALLEYS

CEFN FFOREST

Hillcrest open garden

There's no greater pastime than visiting beautiful gardens on a warm summer's day.

The sun shone brightly for keen gardeners Bev Price and Mike O'Leary when they opened up their beautiful gardens to the public as part of the National Garden Scheme. Guests enjoyed tea served in bone china cups and saucers with strawberries and cream and a selection of pastries.

For more information on Hillcrest please visit www.hillcrestgarden.co.uk

For more information on the NGS please visit www.ngs.org.uk



Sylvia and Ian Burns of Maescywmmer



Sylvia James and Janet Cumpstone, also of Maescywmmer



Maureen Hannaford, Bryan Bradfield, Matthew Bradfield (aged 10), Mary Bradfield, Mary Bradfield snr, Peter Bradfield of Bargoed and Deri



Mike O'Leary and Bev Price



Ann Beard of Cwm and Jen Davies of Usk



Linda Bray, Keith Bray of Newport

MISKIN

Hats off to Miskin Manor for Ascot Day!

Ascot Day provides the ideal opportunity to dress up and the ladies certainly didn't disappoint at Miskin Manor's annual event.

A resourceful and eclectic group attended, dressed in everything from designer wear to High Street, online and hand-sewn vintage pieces, picked up on travels far and wide.

Miskin Manor Country Hotel and Health Club
Miskin CF72 8ND
01443 224204
reservations@miskin-manor.co.uk
www.miskin-manor.co.uk



SOCIAL LIFE



John Richards, Yvonne Wilson, Margaret Gregory and Martin Gregory of Cardiff and Caerphilly



Mike's mum, Mrs Audrey O'Leary



Mike, Jill Roberts, Bev



Turn to page 16 to find out lots more about Mike and Bev's fabulous haven of horticultural treasures and tranquility in the heart of the Valleys.



Photographs courtesy of Gary and Sue Photography www.garyandsuephotography.com

The Hamptons store in Penarth has just celebrated its fifth birthday. During this time it has established itself as one of the leading interiors venues in Wales.



RETAIL HEAVEN

Hamptons is the brainchild of interior designer, Andy Bradshaw and garden designer, Peter Knowles who also have their design studios within the store.

Both Andy and Peter work on a variety of projects, from newly built homes to single rooms, country estates to courtyard gardens - or you could simply employ them for a few hours' consultancy to help with your project.

The Hamptons Store is magnificent and oozes style. *"We wanted to create a relaxed environment filled with collections of beautifully designed and unusual products,"* said Andy.

From the moment you enter the store your senses are bombarded by fabulous home fragrances and bath products, beautiful arrangements of flowers that would fool the busiest of bees, elegant glassware and gorgeous greetings cards studded with swarovski crystals. *"We work hard to source the unusual and well designed"*, said Peter, and that's borne out by the fabulous collections.



The store itself is a beautifully converted two-storey Victorian building in the heart of Penarth town centre that was originally a fruit and vegetable market and meeting hall. The upper floor has a spectacular timber-vaulted ceiling and is decorated in subtle shades of cream and blue. The whole building has a feel of New England about it.

The upper floor houses the more serious interiors collections with furniture by Tamarisk and Sir Terence Conran, and throws, cushions and gorgeous pebble rugs that force you to kick off your shoes and sink into the sexy, chenille pebbles.



There is also a wonderful selection of lighting and mirrors as well as more decorative interior accessories.

And when you've shopped til you drop and are having all of your purchases spectacularly gift wrapped for free you can enjoy lunch or coffee and home-made cakes in the relaxing Blue Pelican Café upstairs. Lush palms, American colonial style shutters and staff in Hawaiian shirts give the café a real holiday feel. The menu is packed with delicious choices and Manager Sue John has the same attention to detail as the rest of the Hamptons store.



At night, Hamptons transforms into a sophisticated live music venue where diners can enjoy a five-course meal while watching anything from cocktail jazz, opera or a host of excellent tribute singers performing anything from Abba and Diana Ross to Neil Diamond and our very own Shirley Bassey.

Hamptons alone is well worth a trip to Penarth but the town also has a wealth of other reasons to visit including the Esplande and the pier with views across the Bristol Channel, the Washington Art Gallery, parks and cliff-top walks and lots of interesting shops and cafés.



Food is freshly made and the specials board features delights such as smoked salmon and rocket salad with avocado, new potatoes and crusty bread served with a lime, mayo and parsley dressing.

And if you've any room left, the call of the cake table is irresistible. Towering Victoria sponges and lemon drizzle cake which are apparently completely calorie free... well almost! There's also a nostalgic selection of ice cream favourites including knickerbocker glory and banana split. The Hamptons afternoon tea is a towering confection of sandwiches, scones and cakes and for that special occasion you can add strawberries and Champagne.



Hamptons
10 Ludlow Lane, Penarth CF64 1EA

029 2070 5391
www.hamptons-design.co.uk



As a youngster, I spent many a weekend trailing around garden centres with my parents who were keen garden lovers. Fortunately I inherited their passion for nature and all things botanical, yet at times I confess to having been a little bored. Nowadays, however, a new breed of garden centre, such as Pugh's Garden Village in Radyr, are entertaining and inspiring people of all ages, including budding infant horticulturists.

NATURE NURTURE

Pugh's is located minutes from the A470 between Cardiff and the Valleys and Junction 32 of the M4, yet the surrounding countryside and beautiful views of the fairytale Castell Coch are enough to encourage even novice gardeners. With over sixty years in the business and forty of those based in Radyr, Pugh's are experts in their field.

More of a destination for all manner of shopping needs, they recognise that the garden has become an extended part of the home, rather than being apart from it. Lifestyles have changed and pastime activities are more interconnected than ever before. It makes sense then to provide a range of products, services and standalone businesses under one roof that focus on the home, garden and outdoor living.

Talking of the great outdoors; at the risk of generalising a little here, most people who appreciate the garden and forces of nature may also keep pets, whether that be the four-legged 'walkies' variety or a less high maintenance goldfish. Pugh's Garden Village plays host to Maidenhead Aquatics, specialists in tropical and marine fish. Alex James says, *"Being based at Pugh's in Radyr offers our customers some of the finest aquatic facilities in Wales with easy access from the M4 and central Cardiff."*

Dog owners can pop to Pugh's and check their pooch in to Barkers Groomers who offer a full grooming service for their beloved doggies. Marilyn Bowden from Barkers says, *"We provide a friendly, reliable and caring service for small and medium sized dogs and have many satisfied customers. We're hoping to expand shortly to provide a grooming service for larger dogs."*

With the animals tended to, it's time for you to take the weight off your feet and indulge in a slice of cake, a cup of tea or a selection of snacks and meals at The Bay Tree café which will provide a welcome retreat before considering your next move. I'd suggest the fabulous Ty Nant Farm Shop. Here you will find a variety of fresh produce, delicious breads, Welsh food products, cheeses and delicatessen treats.



Take advantage of the pick and mix selection of frozen seasonal foods such as fruits, berries, roasted vegetables and breakfast pastries. With Christmas only a few months away, make a note to order your festive hampers, meat and poultry from the shop.

"Easy access from the M4 and central Cardiff."



So, now to the garden. As anyone with green fingers will know, the end of summer is not the end of the gardening season; on the contrary, it is the beginning. Tasks need to be undertaken before winter truly sets in and that's where Pugh's friendly and knowledgeable staff can help; they can advise and answer your questions on plant and shrub care and preparing your garden for the spring. For instance, to guarantee a spectacular show of blooms from January through to April, you need to plant spring-flowering bulbs in the autumn.



“The end of summer
is not the end of
the gardening season.”

Top tips from Pugh's for this autumn

- Care for wild birds with their selection of nuts, seeds and feeders
- Clean up garden debris
- Protect roses and delicate shrubs from the frost
- Divide perennials
- Collect and save seeds from plants.

For anyone reluctant to give up al fresco dining, Pugh's also stock a range of chimeneas, barbecues and outdoor lights for a cosy glow during cooler autumn evenings. Perfect for atmospheric Halloween and Bonfire parties.



“The garden has
become an extended
part of the home.”

If you're intent on keeping warm indoors, then it's worth visiting the Heatforce renewable energy show room at Pugh's Garden Village. Paul Thomas from Heatforce says, *“We offer green technology as an efficient and environmentally friendly way to heat your home and provide hot water. There is an increasing demand from customers for renewable heating technologies and we support that.”*

Whether it's gifts, pots, plants, pets or winter pansies with their smiley little faces, gardening certainly seems to have taken on a new meaning and Pugh's has got it covered.



Pugh's Garden Village
Tynant Nurseries, Morganstown
Radyr CF15 8LB
029 2084 2017
www.pughsgardencentre.co.uk

Pugh's also at Style Gardens,
Port Road, Wenvoe, Vale of Glamorgan

Opening Hours
Monday to Saturday 9am - 5.30pm
Sunday 10.30am - 4.30pm



THE LAST WORD

Suzanne Jaya, personal stylist, image coach and writer talks to us about her memories of valleys living and what life was like as the local doctor's daughter.

Where did you live?

I was born in the early 1960s near Pontypridd, when my father was a resident surgical registrar at the general hospital. Once he started general practice we lived in Treorchy and Ton Pentre, then moved to Swansea for a while, later returning to Tonyrefail where my dad had his own practice for twenty-five years until his death.

What are your earliest memories?

The babbling brook in Treorchy that my sister and I would walk to with our 'Auntie Hollie'. Time-off for my dad was rare so family outings were precious. We'd spend time going for drives over the Bwlch and Rhigos mountains; I loved the views and often stopped to enjoy a picnic.

It was a close-knit farming and mining community and I remember the kindness of the local people, especially as I was seriously ill as a child. We were part of it, yet apart from it. We had friends there, yet we had to maintain a respectful distance because of patient confidentiality. It was a real balancing act for my parents. I recall some great characters - the kind they make TV programmes about nowadays - quirky, helpful and eccentric.

Were there any funny moments?

Where do I start? We lived on a steep hill with the houses owned mainly by doctors, solicitors and teachers. The vicar lived at the top. I remember the day he dropped his collection boxes - they all rolled down the hill, with the vicar in hot pursuit tripping over his robes and regalia. I also recall my dad getting a call from the local police station asking him to help breathalyse some drunks.



"The surgery facilities were primitive compared to nowadays."

As my dad had been drinking at a party he couldn't drive, so had to put on his wellies and take the short-cut through the fields in the dark to the police station - they then drove him home.

What was shopping like in the valleys back then?

There was almost a shop for everything. The electrical shop supplied us with stereo equipment and vinyl records and the owner was our electrician. I loved the warm Italian hospitality you would get in the cafés such as Carpanini's, and Gambarini's restaurant in Porth. We used to take the train into Cardiff for the big shops and I remember the first time we brought home continental foods that we now take for granted, such as coleslaw!

Was a doctor's life different then?

It was hard, especially for my mum. The wives were unpaid doctor's receptionists and she used to take all the flak. We rarely sat down for a meal together and my dad pretty much worked 24/7, but he loved his work and the people.

It sounds a little naff now, but we had a hostess trolley to keep the meals warm because it was the only way my mum could keep her sanity as we all ate at different times. Mobile phones didn't exist, so my dad had no way of knowing if another house call request had been made and some patients didn't have telephones from which he could phone home. My mum would leave the outside light on to warn him not to park the car in the garage, as another call was waiting for him. I lost count of the times my dad went out with clothes over his pyjamas.

Doctors struggled - we didn't live in a nanny society. The surgery facilities were primitive compared to nowadays and patients had to read a notice on the surgery door to tell them who was on-call as there were no answer phone facilities. The telephone never stopped and when we did finally get our first answer phone it was the size of a microwave.

My dad was forward-thinking; he worked with three elderly doctors who were resistant to change and it was frustrating. What's more, the patients were very demanding in that, when they were sick, they were really sick, with industrial diseases being a major problem and he felt great compassion for them.

Sum up your experience and how it compares to now?

I had a 'charmed' life by many people's standards. We were happy, yet the demands of my dad's job took its toll on his health and the household. My sister and I were brought up to be empathetic and to respect people's needs and privacy, yet our lives seemed to be public property as there was less anonymity than in a city.

Now, I see communities that need help. In order for them to thrive we should support and encourage new businesses and local shops.

Turn to page 19 for a chance to win a fabulous Wardrobe Workout with Suzanne

"It was a close-knit farming and mining community and I remember the kindness of the local people."

Jewellerystudio

Roger Williams



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